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BROWNBACK WARNS AGAINST EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback today pledged to fight against the Labor/HHS Appropriations bill if it contained language allowing for destructive embryo research to be conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

At issue is whether or not the NIH can conduct research on stem cells obtained by destroying human embryos. NIH has proposed that if private funds are used to destroy an embryo, NIH scientists can experiment on the remains without violating the congressionally imposed ban on embryo research.

In the draft mark there is proposed legislative language that would allow the Secretary of HHS to grant waiver authority for the derivation of embryonic stem cells. This would constitute a lifting of the ban on embryo research.

“Congress never intended for the National Institutes of Health to give incentives for the killing of human embryos for the purpose of stem cell research, nor to be involved in the direct destruction of human embryos,” said Brownback. “NIH cannot conduct this research under the current ban on embryo research, and we will fight to make sure that they don’t.”

The Labor/HHS appropriations bill is scheduled for markup in the subcommittee tonight and will head to the full committee later this week.